

RECIPROCITY DISCUSSED—TRADE WITH ENGLAND AND HER  
COLONIES.

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S P E E C H

OF

MR. BROOKS, OF NEW YORK,

ON THE

TWO LETTERS OF SIR HENRY BULWER TO MR. CLAYTON, SECRETARY OF STATE, RESPECTING RECIPROCITY, ETC.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 14, 1850.

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## SPEECH

On the two Letters of Sir HENRY BULWER to Mr. CLAYTON, Secretary of State, respecting Reciprocity, &c.

The business on the Speaker's table being taken up for the first time in order since early in March—

Mr. BROOKS said:

An old acquaintance suddenly appears before me, and that is, a message from the President in March last, communicating, through the Secretary of State, two letters—one of January 1st, another of January 3d—from the British Minister. It is well, that in the order of events, as the earth rolls round, something turns up here now and then in the way of business, which is connected with the trade and commerce of the country. No doubt this old acquaintance of mine is quite forgotten by this House, for it has been almost forgotten by me; and what I had to say on it weeks ago, I doubt if I can recall now; or recalling, set forth with that order and clearness that the importance of the subject demands. But I must try; and if the House is not instructed, it will at least, I trust, be refreshed by the novelty of hearing some new subjects discussed.

The British Minister, in his two letters, asks of this country three things:

1st. That the coastwise trade of the United States, between our ports on the Atlantic and our ports on the Pacific, be conceded to British ships.

2d. That to British-built ships be given American registers, when purchased by American citizens.

3d. That no such modifications of our tariff as have been contemplated, especially on iron, be made.

The British Minister, in making these requests, but discharges his duty as a faithful minister of the British Government; and the President of the United States, rightfully acknowledging the control of these subjects to be with the legislative branches of the Government, necessarily sends the British Minister's communications here. Upon their first appearance in this House, in March last, seeing the importance of the topics under consideration, I rescued them from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, where they had been sent without reading; and the House reconsidering that reference, I moved that the letter of January 1st (the coastwise and ship-building letter) be sent to the Committee on Commerce, and the letter of January 3d (the iron letter) to the Committee on Manufactures. I did not wish, even by indirection, to let the idea go abroad, at least for the present, that our California coastwise trade or our tariff laws were matters to be negotiated about at all; certainly not matters for the Committee on

Foreign Affairs. I wished to show to our own and to the British Government, by a reference of these letters to what may be called the *domestic* committees of this House, that they treated of things exclusively for legislation; that they were not for negotiation *now*, and that it was our duty to keep them here in these halls, and not trust them to the chances of diplomacy elsewhere. Sure, nothing is clearer than that the coastwise trade, the registration of vessels, and the amount of duties necessary to be raised to carry on the Government, are for this House, and pertinent for its business committees; not for the White House here, or for the Court of St. James, over sea; or even for a Committee of Foreign Affairs in our own body, which is presumed to be established for, and to have connection with, diplomats, negotiators, and treaties.

I propose, Mr. Speaker, the more fully to impress upon the House the view I have here set forth, to show what the British Government have conceded to other nations, under their late navigation act, which came into operation only in January last, and what is not conceded; for it is upon the principles of reciprocity that the British Minister founds his claim to our Atlantic and Pacific coasting trade, and to the registration in our own country of British-built ships. Before I proceed, however, I wish to say, that reciprocity upon the ocean is no new word in the American vocabulary; but to add, also, that upon British lips it must be all a novelty. Whenever a British minister speaks of it or writes of it, he must feel like an explorer about some *terra incognita*—or as Christopher Columbus felt when his caravels first came within sight of San Salvador. It is very gratifying, nevertheless, in our American ears, to hear a British minister discoursing of reciprocal privileges and reciprocal advantages; because, from the first landing of our forefathers on these shores, we have been struggling against the navigation laws of old England—against them as colonists, and against them as an independent people. From the days of Oliver Cromwell and of Charles II., British navigation laws have been monopolizing for England whatever could be monopolized of the trade and commerce of the world; and in that monopoly she has been so successful that her orators have exultingly cried, “*Britannia rules the sea;*” and her poet as exultingly sung—

“*Britannia needs no bulwark,  
No towers along the steep;  
Her march is o'er the mountain wave—  
Her home is on the deep.*”

But reciprocity with us is no new thing of this year's discovery. We have no two hundred years of legislation to undo, in order to do unto others as we would have others do unto us. Our statute

books and our treaty books are luminous all over, even from the date of our Declaration of Independence, with this Christian principle of free and reciprocal commerce upon the high seas. We have courted competition with all mankind; we have opened the luxuriance and abundance of our broad-spread country to some of the smallest nations upon the globe. Our diplomats, ever since the treaty of 1783, have implored, and almost begged, of Great Britain reciprocity in trade. Their negotiations fill page after page of our diplomatic history. But Great Britain has been exclusive and monopolizing at home and abroad. Her colonies have been as closely shut up against us as have been the ports of His Celestial Majesty of China against all outside barbarians. So liberal, on the contrary, has been our commercial policy, that when, in June last, British statesmen had first discovered the use and the meaning of the word reciprocity, and acted upon it in the principles of their navigation act, which was to go into effect January 1st, 1850, then no legislation was needed on our part—no discussion nor action in this House or elsewhere, to extend the right-hand of fellowship; for already it was extended in an old act of Congress. A mere letter of the Secretary of our Treasury—no proclamation of our President being necessary—a mere rescript from the Treasury, opened at once all our ports to British vessels bringing here articles of the growth and produce of any part of the habitable globe. The British navigation act found the American navigation act already prepared for it; and no fact better than this can show the reciprocal spirit of our people.

Nor can we disguise the fact if we would, Mr. Speaker, that the British Parliament passed the navigation act of June, 1849, with no view to benefit us, or other nations, but for her own purposes, and for her own good. The long and prolonged discussions which this act had, both in the House of Lords and the House of Commons, all show, that a state of things had arisen in Great Britain, and between her colonies, which made a freer trade indispensable, if she would keep those colonies bound to herself, and which had made it just as indispensable, if she would not have the whole world retaliate upon her—exclusion against exclusion. Besides, we have not shut our eyes to the internal struggle which has been going on in the bosom of the British public. When British agriculture fell under the blows of British manufactures, the lords of the soil to the lords of the loom, cheap freights became as loud a cry as cheap bread, and agriculture was willing to avenge itself against commerce, which had allied itself with the loom and the spinning-jenny and the forge, to break down the prices of the products of the soil. Agriculture and manufactures combined, broke down the protection that had for years and years been thrown around ships and ship-building. Cheap freight was as thrilling a cry as was cheap bread. The Manufacturer, arriving at that crisis in competition with us, and others, in the markets of the world, when the British laborer, ground down to the lowest wages, was starving over dear bread, first opened the ports of England to food from all quarters, in order to feed his operative yet cheaper, and then yet lower to reduce his wages; but even then, not quite so successful as he would wish, he next threw open the ports of the United Kingdom to the competition of the ships of all nations, and so to cheap bread, added cheap freights, not only for cheap bread, but for the bulky raw material, which these ships could then bring from all parts

of the world. The British manufacturer, in order the better to compete with the United States and other nations, thus won from agriculture cheap bread and from commerce cheap freights. It was all an internal struggle for what the majority deemed to be British interests, and there was no concession or intent to concede any privileges or advantages to the United States.

Well then, now let us examine this famous navigation act, which was not one day old when the British Minister sent his first letter (January 1st) to the American Secretary of State, requesting a share of our coastwise trade, and the privilege of building some of our ships. There is a coolness even in this precipitation, which is characteristic of our common race. But I appreciate this fidelity, for it is such as every subject or citizen ought to have for the Government he represents in a foreign country. Indeed her Majesty's Government could never be better represented, if activity, and ardor, and perseverance entitle a minister to reputation. But as concessions are demanded from us, upon the ground of the concessions in the navigation act, it is necessary thoroughly to understand that act, in order to know, from what we receive, what we ought to give in return.

The first section of the British navigation act repeals, sweeps off, all the old British restrictive navigation laws, and so far gives to all mankind the freedom of the seas and the freedom of British ports in all parts of the world. For this first section all nations owe Great Britain thanks, and in behalf of my constituents I heartily thank the British statesmen who were instrumental in effecting this sweeping repeal. It was a step in this age of progress which it required courage to take, and which is calculated, more or less, to befriend all the commercial nations of the earth. Its concessions are—

1st. Liberty in all British ports to all vessels with products from all parts of the world. We can now carry coffee from Rio Janeiro to Liverpool, cotton from Egypt, if we wish, mahogany from Honduras; and so can the ships of all other nations. Hitherto England has insisted upon having for herself the carrying trade of all products save those of the people from whence a foreign ship came, and by whom that ship must be owned.

2d. Liberty to all nations to enter from the ports of all British colonies into any of the ports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. This is a trade which, in the main, the British have monopolized for themselves, and which has built up Great Britain at the expense of her colonies.

3d. Liberty to all vessels to trade between all the British colonies—what is called, the inter-colonial trade. A foreign vessel can now go from Jamaica to Halifax, or from Bombay to Hong Kong, or from Quebec to St. John's, in New Brunswick. This is a trade, too, of no great importance to us, save in a few ports, but it is a trade which the British have, in the main, kept to themselves.

Now, these concessions are great strides in reciprocity. They amount to a revolution in the whole commercial system of Great Britain, and far be it from me to underrate or undervalue them. On the contrary, I take a pleasure in setting them forth in their full extent, and to the best of my ability. It is amazing that a people capable of offering to other people such a daring, but generous competition as this, should have been so long about it, and that their courage should not have had an earlier development. But let us turn now

to the *restrictions*, which other sections of this navigation act impose.

1st. The second section of this act shuts all nations out from the coasting trade of the United Kingdom; and the third section is so careful as to name in the exclusion the unimportant islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, Sark, and Man.

2d. The fourth section shuts all nations out from the coasting trade of the British colonial ports—that is to say, no American (or other than British) vessel can go from Calcutta to Bombay, in the East Indies; or from Toronto to Kingston or Montreal, in Canada; or from Sidney to Halifax, in Nova Scotia. Great Britain reserves to her own flag the coasting trade of all her own possessions; and this trade, on our Northern Lakes, and in the East Indies, is often of vast importance to our people.

3d. The fifth section enables any two or more British colonies, through their legislative authorities, praying the Queen of England so to grant, to put their trade on the footing of a coasting trade—that is to say, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia can thus shut all nations out from their inter-colonial trade, and be, as it were, one colony, between the ports of which no foreign nation can trade. Thus, also, by a league between all the British colonies in North America, the Queen assenting by Order in Council, American vessels may be deprived of all the nominal concessions of the navigation act, and the whole inter-colonial trade be taken from us. When we reflect that Great Britain has some forty-three colonies, and that these colonies, in extent and population, in some cases, far exceed that of the mother country, we see that a concession promising us the trade of the East Indies, or of Australasia, say, is but a nominal concession, depending upon the caprice of colonial legislatures, (with which we can have no diplomatic intercourse,) and of an Order in Council. We may be robbed of it at any moment, under this act, and without the repeal of this act. The whole inter-colonial trade, in short, depends upon the will and pleasure of the colonies, and the assent of that, to us, mysterious body, called her Majesty's Privy Council. It hangs by a thread, and may be broken by a breeze.

4th. The tenth section of the navigation act provides, that in case "it shall be made to appear to her Majesty that British vessels are subject in any foreign country to any prohibitions or restrictions as to the voyages in which they may engage, or as to the articles which they may import or export, it shall be lawful for her Majesty, (if she thinks fit,) by Order in Council"—to do what? Why, to retaliate or reciprocate, as she again thinks fit. Every concession heretofore granted, mark you here, is made to depend upon the construction of reciprocity which her Majesty gives to the acts of other nations. The whole British navigation act, with all its magnificent concessions, is made thus repealable at once, without consultation with Parliament, whenever a dispute may arise, whether we are reciprocating fairly and fully or not. The whole act depends upon the will and pleasure of her Majesty and her Privy Council.

5th. The eleventh section of the act enables her Majesty, by Order in Council, to impose additional tonnage duties upon foreign vessels, whenever she may think British vessels are not fairly dealt with in foreign ports.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, all the privileges and advantages of this famous British navigation act may, for a time at least, be swept from the statute book

by the Queen of England, by Order in Council. It is a prerogative and power which the history of our commercial intercourse leads us to dread. These orders in council, these irresponsible decrees have so bad a name with us, that I am afraid to legislate, until I have something more responsible, and more reliable to legislate upon. I am not willing to bare my bosom by fixed law to British competition, when at any moment, the caprice of a British Queen can take from us every concession her legislature may have made.

Now, then, that we understand the British navigation act, let us proceed, sir, to see what the British Minister wants of us, for the country that he so ably represents. But let us first see what his country has already, and then we shall be better able to comprehend the duty of satisfying his other wants. British vessels can enter our Atlantic ports from the Bay of Passamaquoddy in Maine to the Rio Grande in Texas—from the land of ice to the land of the olive and the orange. It is a coast worth trading to, and worth trading with. It is, no little island from the Orkneys to Lands End. What we sell, and what British vessels take as freely from us, as the ships under our own flag, are bulky articles of export, that make large freights—the cotton of New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, and Charleston; the rice, the tobacco, the tar and turpentine of the South; and the corn, grain, and flour, pork and beef, of the North and West. British vessels come freely into competition with ours in the export of all these articles,—but when we go to Liverpool, or London, what of freights have they to give us in return? The fine cotton cloths that she sends us, or the woollens and linens in pay for our raw material, make scarcely any freights at all, and it takes the products of whole plantations to pay for what of British products may be put in not a large wooden box. We find the raw material, and send it to her, and she works it up; but what goes in mountains, returns home in mole-hills. All the advantages are with her, and among the least, but yet of great importance, is having a free competition with us for our own bulky freights. A nation that has with us such a reciprocity, it seems to me, ought to be content, yet the British Minister, speaking for his Government, is not. But fortune has enabled us of late to offer him the means of contentment, if ever man can be made content with the abundance that he has. Upon the Pacific, if not a new world, a world just peopled, has sprung into life and activity, and, as it were, in this our hour, and there is a coast, an American coast, which stretches from Vancouver's Island to Mexico; Oregon is there with a rapidly increasing population, and California is there, with her mines of gold, to pay for anything and everything a British vessel may give her. No nation has as yet profited so much from this trade as Great Britain. She has brought her products there from her East India possessions, from China, from New Holland, from all parts of the Eastern world, and she has had a free and open market, and, as it is estimated, has already carried off over two-thirds of the products of our mines of gold. The trade is to continue to her, as free to her people as to ours, with the advantage that she has over us of the accessibility of her eastern possessions,—and yet the British Minister is a non-content! Sir, when I reflect upon all these things, I ask myself with what the British Government would be content? And the only answer I can find is, in the hearts of all our common race, contentment with

nothing when more can be got. But, in the cry for "more, more," there is assurance at least, an assurance, that some would say borders on impudence; but I use no such unparliamentary language as that.

Thus, having found out, Mr. Speaker, what the British Government *has*, I proceed to consider "the more" that the British Minister wants. To deal fairly with his claim and his argument, I quote his very words:

"As the coasting trade of the United Kingdom is strictly reserved to British vessels, I would not, of course, propose to the United States Government that British vessels should be admitted to trade to and fro between the several ports on the eastern coast of the United States, because such trade, being strictly in coasting trade, is, it may be presumed, confined to United States vessels. But the trade between the ports on the east and those on the west coast of the United States, involving, as it does, the necessity of passing through seas and along coasts far beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, resembles in its nature and character the trade carried on between the United Kingdom and the transmarine possessions of the British crown, into which trade the new act authorizes the admission of the vessels of all countries which may be disposed to meet the concessions of Great Britain in a spirit of fair reciprocity; and her Majesty's Government conceive, that if the United States vessels are to be admitted to this privilege, the United States Government may be fairly expected, in return, to admit British vessels to trade between the Atlantic and Pacific ports of the United States."

We, who have opened an ocean front to Great Britain and her colonies, of five thousand one hundred and twenty miles, upon two oceans, (exclusive, too, of the lakes and of the St. Lawrence,) are called upon here, and in the way of reciprocity too, to surrender our Atlantic and Pacific coasting trade, because it resembles the trade carried on between the United Kingdom and her transmarine possessions! Sir, it is our good fortune that our country is large; that it abounds on both oceans with good harbors; and that it is not a country of divided colonies, but a Republican Empire, if I may be allowed the phrase, that is as contiguous and as conterminous as Great Britain itself. No man need go off American soil when going from one extreme to another of this great Republic. It is all one land—all the coast of one and the same people, though that coast is on two far-distant oceans. The American flag can be carried on foot and by land, from the regions of the Madawaska, in Maine, to the Gulf of California. It is our misfortune, as yet—but we trust it will not be our misfortune long—that our flag cannot be carried by sea from ocean to ocean, without going around Cape Horn. If we measure our coast, we offset our ocean front of five thousand one hundred and twenty miles against the limited coast of the United Kingdom, and that coast upon two oceans, a fair offset to any trade we have, or are likely to have, with the British transmarine possessions. If we measure our articles of export, the advantage I have shown is all with British ships. If we number our harbors, the activity, energy, and productive power of our people, the advantage again is all with the British nation, that is permitted to share with us in all these rights and privileges that are our own. We open as great a variety of soil and climate, and a far greater variety of useful production than the British possessions open to us. When Great Britain, then, excludes our ships from the whole coasting trade of the United Kingdom, I repeat, it is assurance bordering on something else, to ask of us the surrender of any part of our coasting trade, and solely because it is our misfortune, at present—a misfortune that will not trouble us long—to be compelled to sail around Cape Horn

in order to enjoy it. Did not the British Minister remember that the second section of his own British navigation act—on which act he finds this claim—forbids an American vessel going from Quebec to British America on the Pacific coast—a trade exactly similar, in its "nature and character," to the trade between New York and San Francisco?

I think, Mr. Speaker, that I have now demonstrated, that neither in the real, if certain and secured, concessions of the British navigation act, nor upon fair principles of reciprocity, are any more concessions rightfully demanded from us by the British Minister. But I must take this opportunity to say, we have real grievances to complain of against his Government, such as I trust he will bring home to its consideration. We have not, for example, been fairly dealt with in the reciprocal plaster trade of Nova Scotia. To American vessels at the port of entry where the plaster is, a nominal reciprocity in the way of export has existed, but it has been only nominal; and if the navigation act has changed it for the better, I am as yet uninformed. True, we have been able to get plaster at Windsor, but not at the dépôts where it exists; and while British vessels have been enabled to approach the dépôts themselves, American vessels have been shut out below, some six miles off, at some nominal place of entry, and have thus been subjected to the additional expense of transportation; so that British vessels, by being thus enabled to take freights cheaper than ours, have monopolized for themselves the greater part of the trade. If that practice is continued now, the British Minister is in duty bound to exert his influence to discontinue it,—in duty bound I say, because when asking for reciprocity so earnestly, he should, in such small things as these, freely accord it to us.

Nay, more; before I consent to surrender any more to Great Britain in the way of reciprocity, I demand that the British Government should surrender to us some of our ancient rights and privileges, which, under one pretence or another, she has taken from us. I hold her, sir, to her duty to give to us, under the law of nations, the free navigation of the St. Lawrence. I hold her also to her duty, to surrender to us what she bargained for and promised, under the treaty of 1783—the right to take, dry, and cure fish upon the banks of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and other neighboring British provinces. I deeply regret that the time allowed for discussion here, in this House, does not enable me to show, as I can, that Great Britain has dealt with us wrongfully, and unjustly, in this business of the fisheries; that she has taken from us our rights, (we are not asking concessions,) rights common to us, as British subjects, with Great Britain, before the Revolution, and continued to us (*ipso verbo*) in the treaty of 1783, which established our Independence. Under that treaty till the declaration of war in 1812, we enjoyed the right to take, cure, and dry fish upon the banks of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and the neighboring British possessions,—but, much to the amazement of the American negotiators of the treaty of Ghent, and to the American people, it was found that the British Government, soon after the peace, abrogated that right, drove off our fishermen, and contended that the war annulled the right we had as colonies, and the right we had as an independent people, continued by the treaty of 1783. The treaty of Ghent, we had no doubt, when negotiated, continued to us what the treaty

of 1783 guaranteed; but the then British Government soon taught us the contrary, and it was only after a long and arduous struggle on the part of Messrs. Adams, Rush, and Gallatin, that we were enabled to obtain the restricted privileges agreed upon in the convention of 1818, the privilege of taking fish a marine league from coasts upon which we cannot cure and dry them, or the privilege of curing and drying them upon the uninhabited and uninhabitable parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. Almost all our rights to the fisheries were annulled and abrogated at once, and our commerce suffers daily under the severe restrictions of the convention of 1818. Sir, before more reciprocity is demanded of us, restore to our suffering fishermen the right to fish, won by their valor and enterprise as British subjects before the American Revolution, and solemnly acknowledged afterwards in the treaty of our Independence in 1783. Give us back what has unjustly been taken from us, and then the British Minister can come here, and, with clean hands, demand more reciprocity from us.

Not less unjust, Mr. Speaker, is Great Britain, in withholding from the United States their right to the free navigation of the St. Lawrence. The settled principle of the law of civilized nations, as I understand it, is, that the right to navigate waters owned in common, is free and equal to nations that own them, and that the right is not lost even though these waters may happen to flow to the ocean through a mouth wholly in the dominion of but one of the nations. Of the great upper Lakes—inland seas they may be better called—one (that of Lake Michigan) is wholly within our borders; and the vast Lake Superior, Lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario, are ours as well as British waters. But upon these, our waters, which find an outlet in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we are not permitted to sail to the ocean, because in part they flow exclusively through British soil. What aggravates this injustice is, that under the treaty of 1783, Great Britain, then supposing that the sources of the Mississippi were within her boundaries, and that they were navigable waters, insisted upon, and freely obtained, the right to navigate upon and to follow those waters, through our territories, to the Gulf of Mexico. We, never dreaming that the right to navigate the St. Lawrence, which we had as British colonists, would not be continued to us as American citizens, demanded no such treaty guarantee, and in the long unsettled condition of the wilderness of the Northwest, the right was of but little practical importance, and therefore then not hardly pressed. But now that millions of our people live upon these inland seas; now that fleets are there—fleets greater than ever floated from Venice or Genoa in their palmiest days—we demand our right to go to the ocean upon our own waters, and under our own flag. When the British Minister is authorized by his Government to restore to us that right, as well as that of the fisheries, we shall be far better disposed than we can be now, to concede to him our coastwise trade from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean.

But, sir, if Great Britain had dealt fairly with us, and we had none of these serious causes of complaint, there are great reasons of State why, just now, we should not trust to the chances of diplomacy the surrender of this important coastwise trade. It is vain to disguise, sir, that a great struggle is about to arise between us and Great Britain for the mastery of the Pacific seas—a

struggle, I trust, and I believe, not of arms, but of all the arts of peace—a struggle in industry, in enterprise and energy, for the commerce of that great virgin world, which is but just opened to us from the shores of Oregon and California. We stand but as a people of yesterday upon these shores. Our flag has but just passed the Rocky mountain barriers, and we have yet scarcely realized that it looks down upon the commerce of Asia and the islands of the ocean, from a flag-staff of our own, planted upon our own soil. Before that foothold is firm, the British Minister asks a very valuable share of our trade. The old and well-seated mistress of the Eastern world, whose ocean empire stretches from the straits of Babel-mandel to the seas of Japan, and whose Indian empire sways over a hundred millions of British subjects, with two hundred millions of human beings under British protection there, comes to us when just landing upon the Pacific seas, and demands concessions she has never thought of making herself. We cannot disguise the fact, if we would, sir, that on the north of us, stretching from ocean to ocean, as we stretch, is the vast Canadian colony, with the valuable possession of Vancouver's Island, on the Pacific seas, abounding, it is said, in coal. We feel and know that the trade of Mexico, and of the South American Pacific States, is mainly in British hands. The gigantic Indian empire British arms have established from the Indus and beyond the Ganges, from Cape Comorin to the Himalaya mountains, looms up before us in all its grandeur. Van Dieman's Land, New Zealand, Australia—these are colonies that may make nations of themselves. Why cannot Great Britain be content with the coastwise trade of all of these that she has monopolized for herself? Why stretch out her broad and ever-grasping hand to clutch the commerce between New York or Boston, and San Francisco or the Columbia river? Sir, Great Britain has a start upon the Pacific which we should despair of ever approaching to compete with, if there was any such feeling as despair in the American heart. We who have raised up this mighty Republic within this age and generation, recognize no enterprise of others, that we cannot undertake; no task we cannot achieve, and therefore, we never despair. We feel that within us already, that tells us we are soon to share with the proud mistress of the ocean, the commercial empire of the Pacific sea. Thanks to the spirit, the enlarged comprehension, the daring conceptions of my own immediate constituents in New York, and no thanks, sir, to this Congress, which when invoked, lent them no friendly aid, we shall soon be drawn by the locomotive from Chagres to Panama. The genius of our Fulton will carry us over the seas, and the capital of our countrymen will make the iron horse walk with us through the barriers of the Isthmus. Sir, when that work is done, as done it will be soon, we shall begin to be able to compete with Great Britain for the Pacific trade. But, we shall not be on a par with her, till the conception of Cortez, the dream of two centuries, is realized by our countrymen, in the connection by canal and river navigation of the two great oceans of the world. Thanks again, sir, to the enterprise and energy of my own immediate constituents in the main, this dream of mankind is already in the process of realization. The river San Juan, in Nicaragua, will soon be navigated by American steamboats, and, through the lakes of the interior, access will soon be found by breaking down the

brief barriers of the Pacific ocean. New York companies project and superintend the execution of these great works, and they will not fail or falter in their hands. Show our people only what is necessary to be done, and it will be done. Until these works are done, however, I am not willing to share with Great Britain our coastwise Pacific and Atlantic trade, nor should I be then, unless she made her navigation act irrepealable by the Queen of England in Council, and unless she restored to us our ancient rights upon the St. Lawrence and the coasts of Nova Scotia and New Foundland. For the present we need every advantage we have on the Pacific coast, to enable us to strengthen, and increase our commerce there, and to prepare for that great struggle which we must have with Great Britain for the commercial mastery of the Pacific world.

Thanking the House now, Mr. Speaker, for the attention they have given to this discussion of a far from exciting and purely commercial topic—a topic of peace, so unlike that of discord with which this Hall has rung since December last—I promise to relieve them from any further attention after briefly dwelling upon one more point, the second point that the British Minister made in his letter of January 1st, viz:

That to British-built ships be given American registers when purchased by American citizens, because to American-built ships are given British registers when purchased by British subjects.

But before I go further I wish to say, that the third request which the British Minister makes, viz: that no addition be made to the duties imposed by the present tariff, I leave to the discussion of other gentlemen, especially to the gentlemen from Pennsylvania, upon which State, I am sure, there will be "a very disagreeable effect" "produced upon public opinion," if something is not done by this Congress—an effect quite as "disagreeable" as the British Minister says will be produced in England, if, as he apprehends, the idea on the part of our Government is carried out, of changing the duty on iron.

Sir, we who have been attentive observers of British commercial history, and of British parliamentary debate, know very well why to foreign-built ships, when purchased by British subjects, were given in the late British navigation act, British registers. It was to have cheap ships, as well as to have cheap freights and cheap bread. It was to enable her people, when throwing open their ports to other nations, to be enabled to compete with them in freights by purchasing ships wherever they could be built cheapest. No British statesman ever threw out the idea, even in debate, that its purpose was to benefit these United States, and so to obtain a claim of reciprocity from us. The fact was, timber is cheaper in the north of Europe than it is in England, and labor is cheaper on the Baltic than it is in England, and the object was to have the cheapest ships. It cost as much, it was well said in the House of Commons, to bring ship-building timber from Georgia and Virginia to Maine and New York, as from the Baltic to England, and it was well known that our shipwrights demanded and had much higher wages than British shipwrights would put up with. It required, therefore, much ingenuity on the part of the British Minister to invent or to discover that anything lurked in this part of the British navigation act of advantage to us. I rather suspect, that he had in his mind's eye the advan-

tages which Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, where there are little or no duties on cordage or iron, would have over the ship-builders of Maine and New Hampshire and Massachusetts, if we would only let these British colonies build our ships. Labor is cheaper there than in the United States. The English, the Scotch, or the Irish immigrant never discovers the full value of himself as a man, so as to raise his old European rate of wages, till he puts his foot in the United States. We know that ships can be built in the British provinces some twenty per cent. or more cheaper than in New England or New York. Perhaps it is not wise for me, then, as my constituents are large purchasers of Maine-built ships, to resist the purchase where it can be cheapest made. But I desire to show what sort of reciprocity lurks in this proposition of the British Minister. I desire, too, to establish the fact, that ship-building is a great branch of our manufacturing industry, and to have Maine recognized as a State well protected by our laws, and one of our largest manufacturing States—a fact which, when her Representatives have votes to give upon the tariff, I regret to say, they too often forget. But my constituents are not altogether uninterested in this, though not afraid of competition with ship-builders in any part of the world. In my own congressional district are the largest shipyards in the United States. From the hard hands, but clear heads, of my constituents, went forth those palaces of the ocean, that took the stars and stripes, by steam, around Cape Horn, and whose keels first ploughed the shores of California. These shipwrights—these artificers in iron—these men of hard work but of high genius, create, perfect, and adorn all that private steam ocean marine, which, in the event of another war with England, is to dispute with her the empire of the seas. Sir, they have an interest, then, in understanding well where they are, and what, if anything is to be done. It would, I am sure, produce "a very disagreeable effect upon public opinion" among them, if they were compelled to work for British wages, or to put up with a British laborer's fare. The greater the necessity, therefore, for my insisting that all these things which the British Minister demands of us be kept here, as things for legislation here, never to be parted with even by indirection, as in a trust to our Committee of Foreign Affairs.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I am nearly done. It has been my misfortune in addressing you, that since March last, I have scarcely thought of the many and complicated topics upon which, this day, I have so suddenly been summoned to speak; and that, therefore, such order and method of exposition have failed me, which, it may be, I might have had, if but an half hour's preparation had been allowed. But, it has been my good fortune, too, I must confess, to be able to unearth and to raise from the dead, the business of the country, that has for months been sleeping on your table, to show that that country has other interests, as well as that one which has overwhelmed now nearly six months all others; nay more, to awaken, I hope and trust, larger views of our nationality, a broader and better comprehension of our glorious Republic and its destinies; and if for the hour, I have hushed sectional strife, and made this House think of our common Union, and share with me in pride over the Present and in patriotic aspirations for the Future, it has been an hour not altogether misspent.